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Follow-up to the outcome of the special session on children

Follow-up to the United Nations special session on children

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report has been prepared in response to the request of the General Assembly to the Secretary-General, in its resolution 57/190 of 18 December 2002, to prepare a report on progress achieved in realizing the commitments set out in the final document of the twenty-seventh special session of the Assembly, entitled "A world fit for children", with a view to identifying problems and constraints and making recommendations on the action needed to achieve further progress, and to submit the report to the Assembly at its fifty-eighth session.

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I. Introduction

1. The special session of the General Assembly on children, held from 8 to 10 May 2002, was the first session of the Assembly devoted exclusively to children. It was also the first time that delegations to the Assembly included children as official members. The twenty-seventh special session was convened to review progress since the World Summit for Children in 1990 and to re-energize the global commitment to children.

2. At the special session, delegations from 190 countries adopted a Declaration and Plan of Action entitled "A world fit for children" (resolution S-27/2, annex), which committed their Governments to a time-bound set of specific goals for children and young people, with a particular focus on: (a) promoting healthy lives; (b) providing quality education; (c) protecting children against abuse, exploitation and violence; and (d) combating HIV/AIDS.

3. In addition, delegates committed their Governments to a framework for moving forward, which included:

(a) Developing or strengthening of national and, where appropriate, regional action plans for children, including a set of specific time-bound and measurable goals and targets based on the Plan of Action, by the end of 2003, with wide involvement of civil society, including non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and children;

(b) Strengthening national planning, coordination, implementation and resource allocation for children and integrating the international goals of "A world fit for children" into the policies and plans of national Governments;

(c) Establishing or strengthening national bodies for the promotion and protection of children's rights;

(d) Regular monitoring of the situation of children at the national level and periodic reviews of progress towards the fulfilment of the global agenda.

4. The Declaration and Plan of Action are the international community's pledge to act together to build a better world for children. Their four major goals reinforce the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals, seven of which directly address and affect the rights of children. Thus, building a world fit for children will be a major contribution to achieving the Millennium Development Goals, the achievement of which is of central importance to children.

5. "A world fit for children" provides a stepping stone for achieving the ideals and standards set out in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols.

6. It should be noted that "A world fit for children" and the Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development[1] and the Plan of Implementation[2] of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, held in Johannesburg, South Africa, in 2002, are mutually supportive. Investing effectively in children is a powerful force for achieving true sustainable development. Healthy, well-nourished and educated children become productive young adults. These young adults may become healthy, educated parents — a true measure of sustainable development.

7. The HIV/AIDS-related goals set out in "A world fit for children" are firmly grounded in the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS (resolution S-26/2, annex), adopted at the twenty-sixth special session of the General Assembly, on HIV/AIDS. The Declaration's goals and commitments on the health, development and protection of children, young people, women and families are paramount to achieving the goals of "A world fit for children" and the Millennium Development Goals.

8. The Monterrey Consensus adopted at the International Conference on Financing for Development, held at Monterrey, Mexico, in 2002,[3] renewed the world's commitment to unlock additional resources to invest in development. Studies show that investing in children can yield higher economic and social returns than virtually any other type of public and private investment. An investment of $1 in comprehensive child development programmes has a $7 return on future cost savings. The agenda of "A world fit for children", is therefore, a natural bridge between the Monterrey Consensus and the Declaration and Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

9. The substantive follow-up to the special session on children is taking place in the context of the coordinated follow-up to the other major international conferences and summits. Together, these constitute a holistic development agenda, with the overarching objective of eradicating poverty. The interlinked goals, targets and indicators of these conferences at the global, national and subnational levels call for an integrated and mutually supportive approach to follow-up and for close harmonization of planning, programming and monitoring and evaluation activities.

10. The present report has been prepared in response to General Assembly resolution 57/190 of 18 December 2002. It presents a preliminary report of progress made in follow-up to the special session on children in the period since May 2002, globally and by region; highlights action already taken in the four major goal areas; and calls for renewed efforts to achieve "A world fit for children".

II. Progress in follow-up to the special session on children

11. At the special session on children, all countries committed to develop and/or strengthen national and, where appropriate, regional action plans for children through various mechanisms. Those plans were specifically identified in "A world fit for children" as an immediate follow-up action to be completed as a matter of urgency by the end of 2003. A critical first step towards the implementation of the commitments made at the special session. The plans provide a process for countries to translate the agreed international goals into national and subnational goals based on local needs and situations. It puts in place a mechanism to facilitate meaningful implementation, monitoring and review of the goals.

12. One year after the special session, mechanisms have been put in place in many countries and specific steps taken. Partnerships have been strengthened and commitment to action reinforced. Governments, foundations, NGOs, civil society organizations, the private sector and United Nations agencies have worked together at different levels to ensure that the Declaration and Plan of Action are enthusiastically and diligently pursued. However, follow-up actions have not received high priority in all countries or regions. More systematic efforts and

exchanges of experience are called for if the pledges made to children at the special session are to be fulfilled.

A. Global progress

13. Globally, there has been good progress in follow-up to the special session, despite the crises and conflicts that have affected a number of countries and regions since May 2002. Close to 140 countries have taken concrete actions to translate the commitments into national action plans and/or to integrate them into existing plans and policies. Information received by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) as of the end of July 2003 indicates that 29 countries had completed or drafted new national plans of action for children and that 64 countries were in the process of or will start to develop such plans. In addition, 10 countries have updated their existing national plans, and 46 countries have integrated the agenda of "A world fit for children" into existing national plans and policies, poverty reduction strategies and sectoral policies. Many countries have been using multiple mechanisms in the follow-up to the special session. Overall, however, progress has been uneven.

B. Progress by region

Sub-Saharan Africa

14. About one half of the countries in sub-Saharan Africa have taken specific follow-up actions. In Eastern and Southern Africa, six countries were in the process of developing or will start to develop national plans of action and seven countries have incorporated the agenda of "A world fit for children" into existing national plans, poverty reduction strategies and sectoral policies. In 14 countries, a considerable amount of awareness-raising took place after the special session. Five countries took advantage of the Day of the African Child and two of the International Children's Day of Broadcasting to disseminate information on the special session. "A world fit for children" was widely distributed in many countries and a child-friendly version — "A world fit for us" — was disseminated in a few countries. Numerous workshops and sporting and cultural events were organized to take the message of the special session to the general public. In some countries, children and young people have participated in the follow-up process.

15. In West and Central Africa, eight countries are in the process of developing or will start to develop national plans of action, and eight countries have incorporated the agenda of "A world fit for children" into national plans, poverty reduction strategies and sectoral policies. A meeting on children and poverty was organized jointly in May 2003 by the European Union, the United Nations system, the African Development Bank and other African institutions. Participants reviewed the situation of children and government representatives committed to accelerate progress towards the goals set out in "A world fit for children".

16. At the regional level, the African Union (AU), the Economic Commission for Africa and UNICEF are collaborating on the preparation of a major report on the state of Africa's children. That report, which is to be updated every two years, will assess the situation of children in relation to the commitments of the special session and will provide follow-up to the Unity's Cairo Declaration on African children adopted by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 2001. In addition, UNICEF

and the Economic Commission for Africa have prepared a paper entitled "The Young Face of NEPAD" (the New Partnership for Africa's Development), which advocates for national, regional and international action to tackle priority issues such as HIV/AIDS and girls' education within the framework of NEPAD and calls for the well-being of children to be included in NEPAD's peer review mechanism.

17. Parliamentarians and NGOs have supported follow-up to the special session. For example, the coalition of African NGOs for children, which convened a pan-African conference in June 2003, adopted a legal and strategic framework for follow-up to the special session and approved a five-year plan of action.

Asia

18. In East Asia and the Pacific, 15 countries have developed or are in the process of developing their national plans of action. One country has decided to implement the Millennium Development Goals and its poverty reduction strategy at the local level while another has incorporated the agenda of "A world fit for children" into its national development plan. At the third East Asia and the Pacific Regional Children and Young People's Forum, held in December 2002, young people and youth organizations shared lessons learned and discussed ways to further strengthen their countries' follow-up actions. They developed concrete strategies and projects, including regional networking, advocacy, research, training and capacity-building. They also prepared a statement to be sent to Governments, NGOs and civil society organizations in the region to urge them to support meaningful participation by children and young people.

19. The sixth East Asia and the Pacific Ministerial Consultation on Children, which was held in May 2003 in Indonesia, reviewed progress made in the region for children in relation to the Millennium Development Goals and the goals of "A world fit for children". The countries agreed to enhance children's rights and to strengthen partnerships for and with children. The Bali Consensus, a regional commitment and plan of action for every nation in the region to work towards improving children's rights, was adopted at the Consultation. Member countries agreed on strategies to strengthen national planning and ensure coordination, implementation and recourses to fulfil their commitments for children. In reviewing the situation, the region has identified education as an overarching imperative with four issues set as regional priorities: acting against commercial sexual exploitation and trafficking of children; fighting HIV/AIDS; improving nutrition; and reducing maternal and neonatal mortality.

20. In South Asia, five countries have been preparing national plans of action; one country has integrated the agenda of "A world fit for children" into the national development framework, within the context of repatriation, rehabilitation and reconstruction; another country is incorporating the agenda into existing national planning mechanisms; and one country has been developing a poverty reduction strategy reflecting that agenda.

21. The process of preparing the national plans of action has stimulated new partnerships and networking among stakeholders, for example with postal departments and chambers of commerce. Since the special session and the associated children's forum, many countries in the region have seen a greater acceptance of children's participation in decisions that affect them.

Central and Eastern Europe, the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Baltic States

22. The region has seen growing and diverse participation in the follow-up to the special session by political leaders, civil society activists and young people. This demonstrates clearly that there is increasing political commitment to addressing the many challenges of creating a region fit for children. Of 22 countries, three have completed national plans of action and 14 countries are updating the existing national plans or developing new ones. Two countries are developing sectoral plans in line with the agenda of "A world fit for children", and eight countries have incorporated the agenda into poverty reduction strategies and other policy instruments.

23. In June 2002, the region's emerging civil society took a major step forward by launching the NGO/UNICEF Regional Network for Children in Sarajevo. Bringing together national NGO networks representing more than 1,800 civil society organizations from all countries of the region, the statute and action plan of the Regional Network include commitments to achieving the goals of "A world fit for children" in the framework of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The national NGO networks were involved in the process of developing national plans of action and other policy instruments in 18 countries. The Regional Network also launched its first major advocacy campaign, "Leave No Child Out" during its General Assembly in June 2003, focusing on children who face social exclusion due to poverty, disability, displacement, gender and ethnic discrimination, as well as stigmatization arising from institutionalization and HIV/AIDS.

24. A major priority in the region for achieving and sustaining the goals of "A world fit for children" is participation of children and young people. In 17 countries in the region, there have been positive results in terms of meaningful partnerships with children and young people in the development of national plans of action and other policy instruments that affect them.

25. The second Intergovernmental Conference on Children in Europe and Central Asia, co-organized by the Governments of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Germany, is scheduled to take place in Sarajevo in May 2004. Its aim is to motivate further countries from Western, Central and Eastern Europe, the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Baltic States to integrate the agenda of "A world fit for children" into national policy and legislative frameworks; increase budgetary allocations for children; and improve monitoring of progress towards the goals. The conference will promote political commitment and support by civil society, enhance participation from all sectors of society and leverage existing policy and legislative frameworks in favour of children.

Latin America and the Caribbean

26. Follow-up to the special session in the region has centred on the preparation of national plans of action and on mobilizing political leaders, the media, civil society and children and adolescents in favour of children's rights and the achievement of the goals of "A world fit for children". Five countries have launched new national plans of action; three are likely to complete their programmes by the end of 2003; and another 13 are in the process of developing and finalizing them.

27. There have also been significant actions in support of national efforts at the subregional level. The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) has drafted a human and social development strategy with a mandate to reflect the goals of "A world fit for children". CARICOM has identified early childhood development, quality basic education, child protection and the fight against HIV/AIDS as the main focus for action in the subregion.

28. Political mobilization has been strengthened through the Ibero-American summits, which bring together the Presidents and Heads of Government of Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking countries in Latin America and Europe. The twelfth Ibero-American Summit, held in the Dominican Republic in late 2002, was preceded by a ministerial meeting on children and adolescents, which focused on: (a) the specific follow-up plan for the special session; (b) the fulfilment of all Ibero-American commitments for children; and (c) mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating progress in the implementation of national plans of action in the region.

29. The region has seen many types of social mobilization in favour of "A world fit for children". The "Manifesto for an economy and democracy for children and adolescents", issued by Ibero-American intellectuals, urges international financial institutions, multinational companies, multilateral cooperation agencies and private investors to ensure that no child or adolescent suffers from hunger; that all children and adolescents go to school; and that no child or adolescent has to work or suffer from any type of exploitation and abuse. The Latin America and Caribbean Caucus has been engaged in monitoring the development of national plans of action for child rights in the region.

Middle East and North Africa

30. Despite an atmosphere of conflict and uncertainty in the region, three countries have drafted national plans of action and five are in the process or will start the process of preparing one. Two countries have incorporated the agenda of "A world fit for children" into poverty reduction strategies and sector-wide approaches to development.

31. Some regional organizations have taken follow-up actions. The Arab Summit adopted a comprehensive resolution entitled "An Arab world fit for children" in March 2002 in Beirut. The resolution committed Arab countries to act on behalf of children in line with the goals of "A world fit for children". The League of Arab States will convene its third high-level conference on children in January 2004. In preparation for the conference, the League and UNICEF have been collaborating on the preparation of a report on children in the Arab world. At a consultation of civil society organizations in July 2003 to coordinate and strengthen efforts to provide follow-up to the special session, they agreed to convene the second Arab civil society forum on children in Jordan in December 2003.

32. In May 2003, the Arab Institute for Human Rights organized a regional seminar on follow-up to the special session. NGO reports to the Committee on the Rights of the Child were used to link the special session follow-up with implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. A regional web site, operated by an NGO, has been developed and put into operation as an instrument for networking and information-sharing.

Industrialized countries

33. Many industrialized countries have taken action since the special session, albeit rather slowly. Six countries have completed or drafted national plans of action and another 12 are in the process of preparing or developing one. Children and young people, NGOs and civil society organizations are actively involved in most of these processes.

34. Many countries have organized consultations, advocacy and media campaigns to reach and involve the general public. A few countries have also explored ways to promote follow-up to the special session through official development assistance (ODA) policies and programmes. The national committees for UNICEF and other NGOs and civil society organizations have been an important force in strengthening follow-up activities.

35. A number of regional activities in Europe have sparked further interest and action by Governments and civil society partners. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and UNICEF organized a meeting of parliamentarians in December 2002 to discuss follow-up to "A world fit for children", focusing on sexual exploitation and children's participation. NGOs from Western Europe convened a first meeting to strengthen collaboration in follow-up to the special session.

36. Many municipal governments in Europe have been mobilized to follow up the special session through the Child-Friendly Cities Initiative, and a European network of child-friendly cities is being established. The European Network of Ombudspersons for Children has been actively promoting the establishment of new independent institutions for children in Europe and other regions.

C. Actions by non-governmental organizations and civil society organizations

37. The uniqueness of the special session and its follow-up process is characterized by the enthusiastic participation of NGOs and civil society organizations at international, regional and local levels, as well as by the participation of parliamentarians, religious leaders, communities, families, young people and children, some of whom play leading roles in their countries.

38. The Convening Committee of the Global Movement for Children, an alliance of international NGOs and UNICEF, and the Child Rights Caucus, a global consortium of NGOs, have carried out various activities at global and national levels to raise awareness about the agenda of "A world fit for children". The chief executive officers of the Alliance of Youth, a newly formed steering group mobilizing about 120 million children and young people, has recently joined forces to promote the agenda.

39. During its preparatory meeting in April 2003, the Inter-Parliamentary Union discussed ways for parliamentarians to protect children from abuse, neglect and all forms of violence. The leadership of parliamentarians is essential to implement legislative reforms for the realization of the goals both of "A world fit for children" and the Millennium Development Goals.

40. In many countries, public-private partnerships are being promoted to support actions for children. A few initiatives have been taken in Latin America and East Asia. The media and many communication networks, including the Latin American and Caribbean communications network for child and adolescent rights, have been actively engaged in advocating the agenda of "A world fit for children".

41. The World Conference on Religion and Peace, an international coalition of representatives from the world's major religions, engaged its religious leaders in the follow-up to the special session and in the Global Movement for Children through its Standing Commission on the Child and the Family. In Nigeria in June 2003, African religious leaders formed the African Council of Religious Leaders, a continental inter-faith group, to facilitate concerted action by religious bodies to contribute to goals of the special session related to HIV/AIDS and violence and to monitor national plans of action across the continent. UNICEF and the World Conference also reaffirmed their partnership across Africa, and are currently formulating plans for their global partnerships focused on the agenda of "A world fit for children".

42. In July 2002, the Latin American Episcopal Council and UNICEF strengthened their collaboration for follow-up to the special session by committing themselves to enhancing their joint activities for children in the areas of combating HIV/AIDS, birth registration, early childhood development, child labour, trafficking and sexual exploitation of children and child soldiers. In July 2003 in Santa Fé de Bogotá, UNICEF and the Episcopal Council agreed to launch jointly a publication to take stock of progress and draw on successful experiences in their collaboration. This publication will facilitate experience-sharing not only in Latin America, but also in other regions.

43. The Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) adopted a resolution on child care and protection in the Islamic world in May 2003. The resolution recognized the Plan of Action of "A world fit for children" as a reference for action by 57 Islamic countries and paved the way for more action in those countries.

D. A coordinated response by the United Nations system

44. The United Nations system follows up the special session on children in a coordinated manner with the outcomes of other recent major United Nations conferences and summits. Its follow-up has focused on programmatic support and inter-agency collaboration, advocacy, communication strategies, resource mobilization, building partnerships and alliances and the quantitative and qualitative review of progress made by Member States.

45. Efforts are under way to ensure that the goals, targets and strategies of "A world fit for children" are adequately reflected in the Common Country Assessment and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework processes. The United Nations system also has been working with the World Bank and some bilateral agencies to include the agenda of "A world fit for children" and the Millennium Development Goals in poverty reduction strategies and sector-wide approaches.

46. Many United Nations and other international agencies have taken action to support the agenda of "A world fit for children" and the Millennium Development Goals. In May 2003, the World Health Assembly endorsed new strategic directions

for child and adolescent health and development. The strategy, consistent with the goals of "A world fit for children", brings together crucial elements to reduce childhood deaths and long term disability. The World Health Organization (WHO), together with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), UNICEF and other partners, launched the Healthy Environments for Children Alliance at the World Summit on Sustainable Development to intensify global action on environmental risks to children's health. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Food Programme (WFP) contribute to achieving nutrition-related goals and have been working with other United Nations agencies to address the basic and underlying causes of childhood malnutrition. WFP and UNICEF have developed a minimum package of school feeding, health and education interventions, which are being delivered to school children. In reviewing periodic reports of States parties, the Committee on the Rights of the Child refers to the status of national plans of action in its dialogue with and recommendations to States parties.

47. The close correspondence of "A world fit for children" with the Millennium Development Goals and the coordinated follow-up process to international conferences facilitate monitoring of progress by various United Nations agencies. The annual reports of the Secretary-General on progress towards the Millennium Development Goals have reinvigorated existing collaborative efforts in monitoring activities in the areas of health, education, environment, poverty reduction and sustainable development within the United Nations system. The *Human Development Report*, published by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), helps to keep a country-by-country "score card" of progress towards the Millennium Development Goals. In the area of promoting healthy lives, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), UNICEF, WHO and the World Bank help countries to improve collection and use of data on health systems and outcomes. In the field of basic education, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), UNICEF and the World Bank have strengthened their collaboration in monitoring data collection. FAO, UNICEF and WFP collaborate in the areas of nutrition and food security. In the battle against HIV/AIDS, all cosponsors of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) provide coordinated support to Member States in combating the epidemic. In the area of protecting children against abuse, exploitation and violence, the Understanding Children's Work project, a joint endeavour of the International Labour Organization (ILO), UNICEF and the World Bank, has analysed a wide range of data related to child labour. UNICEF has also been working extensively with NGOs, including the Social Science Research Council and the Norwegian Refugee Council at the global level, and with many more at country level, to map the situation of children affected by armed conflict.

48. *Childinfo*, a software package developed by UNICEF for storing, organizing and displaying socio-economic data using tables, charts and maps, is currently used in more than 50 countries worldwide. The software has been adopted by Governments for their internal use. *Devinfo*, a development of *Childinfo*, is currently being tested and will be introduced to all United Nations country teams early in 2004 to support countries in monitoring progress towards the Millennium Development Goals.

III. Progress in the four major goal areas

49. One year after the special session, the major statistical indictors for the four goal areas of promoting healthy lives, providing quality education, protecting children against abuse, exploitation and violence and combating HIV/AIDS have not changed much. However, important actions have been taken and initiatives are ongoing, which, in the medium and long term, will contribute to their achievement.

A. Promoting healthy lives

50. Despite progress made in the past decade to promote healthy lives, nearly 11 million children younger than five years of age die each year. A recent series of papers on child survival[4] has highlighted the importance of under-nutrition as an underlying cause of child deaths associated with infectious diseases and the effects of multiple concurrent illnesses. Pneumonia, diarrhoea, malaria and HIV infections are still among the leading cause of child deaths, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. Effective low-cost interventions are available and can prevent two thirds of these child deaths. The challenge is how to reach the children, women and families who need the interventions most, how to ensure equity of access and how to take promising pilot interventions to the required scale.

51. The new Accelerated Child Survival and Development programme of UNICEF is an integrated approach to maternal and child survival and development that uses cost-effective interventions. The programme, which covers over 16 million people in 11 countries in West and Central Africa with high under-five mortality rates, aims to reduce mortality and malnutrition in children under five years of age through integrated programmes, including the expanded programme on immunization, prevention and case management of the main childhood diseases (malaria, pneumonia, diarrhoea) and improved antenatal care for women. The approach of the programme complements ongoing national health sector reform initiatives and sector wide approaches and encourages strong national and district-level ownership. Increasingly, it is being integrated into poverty reduction strategies and medium-term expenditure frameworks by participating countries. By the end of 2002, more than 100 countries in all regions had started implementation of the WHO/UNICEF Integrated Management of Childhood Illness strategy and more than 50 countries had started to put the strategy into action beyond the initial pilot districts.

52. Complementing the ongoing efforts of UNICEF and WHO, the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization — a strategic alliance between the private and public sectors — has helped to infuse significant additional resources to increase and sustain high levels of immunization rates and introduced some new and improved vaccines against childhood diseases.

53. In addition to existing routine immunization programmes, intensive efforts in countries at high risk for measles epidemics have ensured that over 100 million children have been vaccinated against measles in over 20 countries in the past three years.

54. The global polio eradication initiative has seen further significant gains in the past year. The number of polio-endemic countries has dropped to just seven and the number of global polio cases has been reduced by 99 per cent, from more than 350,000 reported cases in 1988 to 1,918 in 2002. Despite a funding shortfall,

UNICEF, WHO, Rotary International and the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, together with programme and donor countries, are determined to achieve the goal of worldwide polio eradication by 2005.

55. In the past year, the Roll Back Malaria global initiative has scaled up its activities to support the interim goals outlined in the Abuja Declaration and the goals of "A world fit for children". The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria is a major new source of funding for tackling malaria in Africa. To date, 25 countries and one multi-country group have obtained a total of $256 million from the Fund for an initial two years to scale up malaria control activities, with the possibility of further expansion. The recent availability of long-lasting insecticide-treated bed nets offers a major new opportunity for drastically reducing malaria-related mortality and morbidity and contributing to better health and productivity.

56. In 2002, UNICEF and WHO launched the Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding to promote breastfeeding. The strategy calls upon Governments, NGOs and others to support a three-pronged approach to improve the nutrition of children through increased national commitment, including laws and policies and "baby-friendly" health systems and to provide support to communities and families.

57. A colloquium on nutrition and HIV, organized by UNICEF and the World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action in the United Republic of Tanzania in August 2002, defined a common agenda for reducing the transmission of HIV to babies of HIV-infected mothers, while ensuring that breastfeeding is protected, promoted and supported among the general population. UNAIDS, UNFPA, UNICEF and WHO have collectively finalized a framework on priority actions in HIV and infant feeding that provides guidance for coordination.

58. Progress continues to be made towards ensuring that all newborns are protected from brain damage and loss of learning capability resulting from iodine deficiency disorders. At a meeting in Moscow in October 2002, salt producers from three countries in Central and Eastern Europe, the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and the Baltic States committed themselves to the implementation of universal salt iodization programmes, and advocacy efforts were stepped up to raise awareness. A number of countries are now reporting increased consumption of iodized salt.

59. The Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition, launched at the twenty-seventh special session of the General Assembly in May 2002, has made its first grants to several countries. The grants will support national food fortification programmes. For years, it has been a policy of WFP to provide malnourished children with such fortified commodities as blended foods, oil and salt where and whenever possible. In collaboration with Governments, NGOs and the private sector, WFP is developing novel, field-based milling-cum-fortification technologies, adapted to local circumstances. At the annual meeting of the International Grains Council in June 2003 in London, the world's major producers and traders of food grains agreed to participate in the fortification of flour and staple foods with iron and vitamins. This commitment of the private sector opens another door for improving the nutritional status of children.

60. Good progress has been made in vitamin A supplementation, with some 72 countries implementing programmes, complementing other efforts of the

Micronutrient Initiative. Nearly one and a half million child deaths are now being averted every year, and the health and nutrition of millions of children are being improved, thanks to continuing progress in vitamin A supplementation.

61. Over 33 developing countries have been formulating national policies on adolescent health and development. These policies acknowledge the importance of providing information, skills, counselling and health services to adolescents and the necessary contribution of several sectors and civil society to address adolescent health and development.

62. National early childhood development policies have been developed by 17 countries and are being developed in 33 more. Based on UNICEF/WHO recommendations, a standard list of recommended family care practices has been promoted by over 60 countries, including home health care practices, hygiene, breastfeeding and complementary feeding, support to women's health during pregnancy and young child stimulation.

63. Significant efforts have been made to improve access to safe drinking water and sanitation facilities. Since the special session, some 86 countries have established new facilities at subnational levels to increase family and community access to water and sanitation; and 10 countries in Asia and Central America have implemented arsenic mitigation programmes as a part of efforts to improve water quality.

64. In 2002, about 72 countries implemented community hygiene education and awareness-raising programmes focusing on improving hygiene practices. Some 47 countries are working with school sanitation and hygiene programmes, including construction of separate facilities for girls in schools as a strategy to improve the enrolment and retention rates for girls.

65. Following the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002, the Third World Water Forum, held in March 2003 in Japan, helped to identify many specific ways to achieve the Millennium Development Goals for securing access to water and sanitation. At the Forum, UNICEF and its partners launched the WASH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene for All) Initiative, aimed at ensuring safe water and clean, separate sanitation facilities for boys and girls in primary schools. In collaboration with WFP and WHO, children enrolled in school feeding programmes in about 30 countries around the world are given deworming tablets on a regular basis.

66. There has been steady progress in Africa towards the eradication of dracunculiasis (guinea worm disease) through safe water interventions. The number of reported cases dropped from an estimated 3.5 million in 1986 to 54,487 in 2002 and several countries are now close to eradicating the disease completely.

B. Providing quality education

67. Much progress has been made in expanding access to and improving the quality of education for all children. Available data indicate that globally over 80 per cent of school-aged children are enrolled in school. However, over 100 million children still have no access to education. Huge disparities exist between regions and between and within countries, and the disparities affect girls, rural children, indigenous children and children from low-income households disproportionately. The main challenge to achieving the goals of "A world fit for children" and the

Millennium Development Goals is the development of affordable and sustainable strategies to address issues related to disparity. This requires a change in national investment patterns and the distribution of costs and benefits in education, the removal of barriers that create disparities, through, for example, elimination of school fees and other charges, and improvement in the quality and relevance of education.

68. The education goals contained in "A world fit for children" correspond closely to the goals of the 1990 Declaration on Education for All and of the 2000 World Education Forum. Since the special session, many countries have been developing specific action plans to achieve the education goals. By the end of 2002, at least 22 countries had developed an education for all plan, and more had incorporated education goals into their education sector policies and plans, poverty reduction strategies and national development plans.

69. The United Nations Girls' Education Initiative, launched by the Secretary-General at the World Education Forum in Dakar in 2000, has engaged a broad range of partnerships of United Nations agencies, bilateral organizations and civil society groups. Building on the comparative advantages of the participants, the partnerships have succeeded in raising awareness of girls' education at the global level. The Initiative now needs to be expanded to regional and country levels to provide effective and coordinated support to girls' education. The "25 by 2005" initiative, supported by UNICEF, aims to accelerate progress in girls' education with a view to achieving the Millennium Development Goal of reducing gender disparity in basic education.

70. The Education for All Fast Track Initiative, initiated by the World Bank in April 2002, has moved forward in investing more national resources in education, increasing the proportion of education budgets to primary education and improving the efficiency of education systems through an indicative framework. This framework ensures minimum standards for class size, student/teacher ratios and funding for non-teacher costs. Some 23 countries have joined the Initiative and will develop education sector plans using the Initiative's indicative framework.

71. To improve the quality of basic education and address the issues of repetition and drop-outs, many countries have been implementing programmes for teacher training, curriculum development and development of pedagogical materials. Increasingly, UNICEF has been supporting countries in building "child-friendly" schools. This intervention provides a holistic approach and involves the training of teachers in active, child-centred learning and the provision of adequate supplies of school materials. It ensures a healthy and welcoming environment, including safe water and separate hygiene facilities for boys and girls. UNESCO continues to work with ministries of education to encourage improved resource distribution aimed at better educational outcomes.

C. Protecting children against abuse, exploitation and violence

72. It is difficult to obtain good-quality data on violence, abuse, neglect, exploitation and discrimination against children. In many ways, the very absence of reliable data shows the continued need for greater commitment to child protection. Evidence collected over the past decade suggests that about 180 million children are engaged in the worst forms of child labour, an estimated 1.2 million children are

trafficked every year, another 2 million are exploited through prostitution and pornography and some 40 million children suffer from abuse and neglect.

73. International legal instruments for the protection of children from violence, exploitation, abuse and discrimination have garnered additional ratifications in the past year. There are now 192 State parties to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, 143 to ILO Convention 182; 60 to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography; and 54 to the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict. Good progress is being made on the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocol against Trafficking in Persons. The first steps have been taken towards the development of a new international convention on the rights of people with disabilities, which is expected to include specific reference to children.

74. The Secretary-General's study on violence against children, requested by the General Assembly, is well under way. NGOs from around the world have pledged their support to make the study a success, including through networks and field consultations. Consultations on female genital mutilation/cutting, most recently in Addis Ababa and in Cairo, have brought together Governments, intergovernmental organizations and academics, religious leaders and NGOs to develop initiatives to meet the goals of "A world fit for children".

75. In 2003, the world saw horrendous examples of children being used in conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Liberia and many cases of sexual abuse of children. It is clear that the call at the special session for greater consideration of children in peace-making processes needs to gain greater attention. Under the leadership of the World Bank, the Multi-Country Demobilization and Reintegration Programme in the Great Lakes region of Africa brought together donors, the United Nations system and seven affected countries to support the demobilization and reintegration of fighters with specific standards for child soldiers. These standards seek to protect the dignity and meet the specific needs of children, particularly girls.

76. Since the special session, eight more countries have developed time-bound plans to combat the worst forms of child labour, making a total of 11 countries. There has been increasing integration of campaigns for the elimination of child labour, with efforts to achieve education for all, as reflected in the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour. Knowledge gaps are being addressed by the inter-agency research project, Understanding Children's Work, described in paragraph 47 above.

77. A number of agreements between Governments have been reached to fight cross-border trafficking of children. A memorandum of understanding on bilateral cooperation for eliminating trafficking in children and women and assisting victims of trafficking was signed in May 2003 by two Governments in Asia. A few Latin American countries have also initiated discussions in this regard.

78. In follow-up to the regional commitment and plan of action "Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation", adopted by the Council of Europe in 2001, the Council has established a group of specialists and, in collaboration with UNICEF, initiated a process for establishment of focal points for development of national plans of action. In 2003, guidelines for protection of children victims of

trafficking were developed and approved by members of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe's Task Force on Trafficking in Human Beings.

D. Combating HIV/AIDS

79. Of the world's 42 million people now living with HIV/AIDS, an estimated 3.1 million are under the age of 15 years. Moreover, it is estimated that 6,000 young people aged from 15 to 24 years of age are infected every day and that globally fewer than one in five people at high risk of infection have access to basic prevention services. Girls are especially vulnerable because of economic, social, cultural and physiological factors.

80. Of the 103 countries reporting on the goals of the special session of the General Assembly on HIV/AIDS, over 87 countries have developed policies or strategies to promote information, education and communication on HIV/AIDS and reproductive and sexual health education for young people.

81. UNAIDS, UNFPA, UNICEF and WHO organized a global technical consultation in March 2003 to mobilize priority health services to achieve the global goals on young people and HIV/AIDS. The outcome of the consultation will contribute to ongoing efforts by countries to ensure that health systems are able to provide services to young people.

82. Countries have also been integrating life skills with knowledge to achieve behavioural change. A few countries have documented successes in integrating life-skills curricula into schools and shown linkages between completion of the curricula and lowered incidence of risky behaviours. WFP is supporting this effort by working with partners to ensure that, by 2005, at least two thirds of its school feeding programmes have an HIV prevention component in the curriculum.

83. Considerable headway has been made in policy development relating to prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV (PMTCT), with some 88 countries having developed policies and strategies. Progress is also being made in providing universal access to antiretroviral drugs in a few countries. PMTCT "Plus" — an initiative which will provide antiretroviral therapy to HIV-infected mothers and their partners — will provide a key entry point for care and support interventions. This initiative is supported by an inter-agency task team of UNAIDS, UNFPA, UNICEF, WHO, the World Bank and other partners. WFP is also working in a number of countries to provide nutritional support to women who are enrolled in PMTCT Plus programmes.

84. About 17 countries have developed policies to address the special needs of orphans and other vulnerable children affected by HIV/AIDS, and another four are in the process of developing such policies. Thirty-seven of the reporting countries have legal measures in place to prohibit discrimination against populations that are vulnerable to HIV/AIDS. In September 2002, the United Nations system and civil society partners convened a group of African leaders to help develop national policies to protect orphans and children made vulnerable by HIV/AIDS. In four southern African countries, FAO, UNICEF, WFP and others have been collaborating to improve food security and nutrition among children orphaned by HIV/AIDS. An inter-agency task team on HIV/AIDS and education, coordinated by UNAIDS and

UNESCO, has been working to ensure coherence and collaboration at country level in making schools responsive to the pandemic.

IV. The way forward

85. The limelight of the special session is fading, but the real work of implementing the Plan of Action of "A world fit for children" in fact has just started. The progress made to date represents a good start, but tremendous challenges lie ahead. All stakeholders — Governments, parliamentarians, civil society, NGOs, families, children and the international community — need to renew their commitment to children and take concrete actions to protect and fulfil children's rights.

86. The countries that have been developing or will develop national plans of action as instruments to promote and pursue the commitments made at the special session should aim to complete them by the end of 2003. Those countries that have chosen to use other mechanisms, such as poverty reduction strategies, national development plans and sector-wide approaches, should ensure that these plans and frameworks specifically and clearly reflect the key goals and targets of "A world fit for children", in order to enable periodic monitoring and future review of the progress made for children.

87. Lessons learned from the follow-up to the World Summit for Children during the 1990s show that national plans of action and other mechanisms can be effective as both a process and a tool for motivating and fostering priority actions for children. They can help to raise the profile of children in national development agendas and to establish and maintain a focus and sense of priority around children across sectors. National and subnational plans of action are especially effective when they are developed and monitored through consensus-building, public participation and partnerships. It is therefore imperative that broad consensus be built, and that civil society organizations, NGOs, families, children and young people be strongly engaged.

88. As recognized in "A world fit for children", countries should also consider reviewing and, where necessary, modifying their legal provisions, policies and the implementation of programmes relating to children as part of the follow-up process.

89. Regional consultations played an important role in the preparation of the special session. Regional groupings of Member States are continuing to make valuable contributions to reviewing the situation of children, addressing cross-border issues and disseminating information and experiences.

90. All countries should follow up the Monterrey Consensus[3] to increase financing for development. Countries that provide official development assistance (ODA) are encouraged to review the priorities and focus of their aid policies and programmes in the light of the goals of "A world fit for children". Besides additional resources, improved domestic governance, participatory planning and sound economic and social policies in developing countries are also fundamental to achieving and sustaining the goals set out at the special session.

91. All countries should consider establishing or strengthening appropriate national institutions for the promotion and protection of children's rights. Related to this, and as also envisaged by the Plan of Action of "A world fit for children",

countries may wish to develop closer linkages between the mechanisms they have already established for monitoring and reporting on the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the follow-up to the special session. All countries should establish or strengthen monitoring systems at national and subnational levels to assess progress towards key child-related goals and increase their national capacities to collect, analyse and disaggregate data by sex, age and other relevant factors. All countries should conduct periodic reviews of progress at national and subnational levels to address obstacles and accelerate progress.

92. "A world fit for children" calls on the Secretary-General to report regularly to the General Assembly on progress made in implementing the Declaration and the Plan of Action adopted at the special session. The Secretary-General proposes to provide an in-depth report to the General Assembly every five years, that is, in 2006, 2011 and 2016, based on national, regional and global reviews of progress. The first review process, which will lead to the report in 2006, will start soon. All countries are therefore encouraged to conduct in-depth reviews of progress in or before 2005. The United Nations system remains committed to providing support to national efforts and regional initiatives where required. As the world's lead agency for children, UNICEF will continue to work with Governments and with other United Nations and international partners to collect, prepare and disseminate information on progress and experiences gained in the implementation of the Declaration and Plan of Action, "A world fit for children".

Notes

[1] *Report of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg, South Africa, 26 August-4 September 2002* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.03.II.A.1 and corrigendum), chap. I, resolution 1, annex.

[2] Ibid., resolution 2, annex.

[3] *Report of the International Conference on Financing for Development, Monterrey, Mexico, 18-22 March 2002* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.02.II.A.7), chap. I, resolution 1, annex.

[4] *The Lancet*, vol. 361, 28 June 2003.